

Smackdown – September 5, 2002: The Holly Show

Smackdown

Date: September 5, 2002

Location: Resch Center Arena, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's hard to say what to expect here but hopefully it's another rocking tag match with some talented people getting to show what they can do instead of jobbing to Undertaker after a former World Champion's finisher doesn't have much of an effect. Oh and we get the debut of Crash Holly for reasons I don't even want to think about. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week, which somehow gets to be narrated by Stephanie. Dang they're getting right to the point this week. Anyway, Undertaker is challenging Brock Lesnar at Unforgiven.

Opening sequence.

Billy vs. Rey Mysterio

A very early Rico distraction (those sideburns are mesmerizing) lets Billy jump Rey and choke in the corner. The tilt-a-whirl powerslam plants Rey and Tazz makes gay jokes. Rey gets in his first offense with a dropkick to the knee so Billy clotheslines his head off, making sure that Mysterio has nothing of note so far. Rico cheats a bit more so the fans are all over him, making Rico the best thing about the match so far. More shots to the back keep Rey in trouble but a springboard dropkick sets up the 619 with Chuck making the save. That means Billy gets to work Rey over even more until Mysterio gets a fluke cradle for the pin.

Rating: D. So Mysterio can go move for move with Kurt Angle in a classic but can barely get in a dropkick on Billy Gunn of all people? This is almost entirely on Billy as he just wasn't giving Rey anything to work with and it showed horribly. It's ok to let Mysterio get in a little offense, get taken down, let the comeback go on for a bit and have the co-villains cheat so Rey can do the big comeback at the end. It's called having a match with a story but this was all about Billy working Rey over without much effort.

Post match Rico tells Chuck it's time...and he proposes to Billy because he wants to be tag team partners for life. Note that the word "marry", "husband" or "I love you" are never mentioned. Billy says yes and hugging ensues.

Cruiserweight Title: Jamie Noble vs. Shannon Moore

Shannon is challenging after pinning Jamie in some recent tag matches. The battle of wristlockery start things off until Shannon armdrags him down. Nidia grabs a leg but Shannon dropkicks the champ to the floor anyway. Back in and a harder clothesline than you would expect from a cruiserweight match puts Shannon back down and a belly to back gets two.

Of course the fans would rather talk about Nidia's puppies because Raw featured a match talking about Molly Holly's hymen, meaning you can't quite blame them at this point. That's what WWE has deemed acceptable from its employees so don't act surprised when no one cares about your matches as a result. Moore elbows him in the jaw and gets a near fall of his own off a neckbreaker. A Whisper in the Wind gets the same but Jamie counters a hurricanrana with a powerbomb. The Tiger Bomb retains the title.

Rating: C+. Good match here but the fans didn't care because WWE has given us no reason to care about them. Just because there's good wrestling out there, no one is going to notice because WWE has made us care more about the women at ringside. I'm not sure what it means that Nidia is possibly treated with more respect than the women on Raw but it seems to be the case.

Paul Heyman is hyping Brock Lesnar up for his match with Randy Orton when Randy comes up and says absolutely nothing of note.

Edge and Rikishi are ready for a six man tag later and Rikishi actually tries to explain how the Stinkface is a symbol or something. Piece of the Kish still isn't a good catchphrase.

Brock Lesnar vs. Randy Orton

Non-title and one of those matches that would be totally different just a few years later. Also Lesnar is now WWE Champion instead of Undisputed Champion as continuity takes another hit for the sake of pulling a title out of a briefcase. Orton charges straight at him and actually gets two off a rollup. That just means an overhead belly to belly though and Brock is already smiling.

Brock throws him over the top and hits an STO back inside. He throws Orton onto his shoulders and drives Randy back first into the buckle over and over as this is a total squash. Heyman: "HE WANTS THIS!" A dropkick to the ribs staggers Lesnar and Orton gets in the backbreaker. For reasons of general stupidity, he heads up top for the high crossbody but gets rolled through into the F5 for the pin.

Rating: C-. Is there something in the water over on Monday Night Raw? You can have Brock roll through people like this on Smackdown but Raw's big solution is to have him sell for people and need Heyman to save him all the time? Ever since he's gone to Smackdown he's been treated like the monster he's supposed to be and it's made him a hundred times more interesting.

Mark Henry congratulates Billy and Chuck.

Crash signs his contract and thanks Stephanie when D-Von comes in. The Reverend is upset about Billy and Chuck but again we never heard the word wedding or marriage. He talks about how immoral is it but OF COURSE Stephanie cuts him off for not showing her enough respect. The ceremony is next week, D-Von faces Batista later and just in case you forgot, Stephanie is the most amazing and intimidating person ever.

Tajiri vs. Mark Henry

Tajiri's kicks and strikes have the effect you would expect them to have and it's time for the slow beating. The handspring elbow is knocked out of the air and Tajiri's sunset flip has no effect at all. A running dropkick to the head works a bit better but Henry shrugs it off and powerslams him for the pin.

Rating: D. Hey, did you know that Henry is really strong? Like, REALLY strong? To the point that he can bend frying pans and is barely hurt by someone kicking him really hard in the head? I'm still not sure who is supposed to be impressed by Henry squashing a member of the cruiserweight division, which is often treated as a bunch of second class citizens in the first place.

Stephanie moderates a sitdown interview (in the back without much light) between Undertaker and Lesnar. After making it clear that they're both EXCLUSIVE to Smackdown, she throws it to Brock who lists off his career accomplishments. Undertaker laughs off the idea of a young pup like Brock beating him because no one has ever taken Brock where Undertaker is taking him. Undertaker promises to beat

Brock up for the first time but Heyman makes it personal by bringing up Undertaker's wife Sara being pregnant.

If anything happens to Undertaker, he'll take care of Sara but not the unborn child. The table it turned over and nothing happens. This was WAY too long and it really didn't make me want to see the match any more than I already did. Granted I checked out when Stephanie started talking about how this was a Smackdown exclusive because it might be the least important detail since...oh whatever the name of whatever award/honor Stephanie has most recently won.

Reverend D-Von vs. Batista

Batista has what would be his theme song for years and the red trunks instead of the gray one he had been wearing. D-Von jumps him to start and gets in a quick chair shot, only to take a Batista Bomb for the pin in a minute and a half. The man that pinned John Cena clean last week everyone!

Nidia talks about the wedding next week (using the word for the first time) and asks Jamie if they'll get married one day. Jamie hugs her and panics.

Matt Hardy brags about going toe to toe with Brock but Shannon isn't all that impressed. Hardcore Holly, Matt's opponent tonight, wants to know where the footage of Matt losing has gotten to.

Eddie Guerrero and Kurt Angle are ready for their six man tag tonight. Angle is annoyed at Benoit for costing him the #1 contendership so Benoit comes in and we have a staredown.

Matt Hardy vs. Hardcore Holly

They trade rollups for two to start before opting to just punch each other in the face. Tazz would rather talk about cheese jokes (Wisconsin remember.) as Holly gets two off a belly to back suplex. A backbreaker sets up a belly to back superplex, only to have Matt knock him away and get two off a moonsault press. The Side Effect gets the same but Holly gets two of his own with a powerbomb. Neither finisher can hit so Hardy grabs a rollup, only to be reversed into another one with Holly grabbing the tights for the pin.

Rating: C+. Surprisingly good match here but I'm not sure I get the point of having Matt lose over and over when he's getting a push with the Shannon Moore stuff. Holly isn't great but at least he's

good for a watchable match. Matt can play the heck out of these over the top characters with huge egos and that's what we're getting with the Mattitude stuff.

Rico doesn't have time to talk because he has wedding plans to set up. He's going to be Billy's best man.

Crash vs. Hurricane

They circle each other to start until Hurricane puts him in a Tree of Woe for a good crotching. The high crossbody gets two on Crash, followed by the Eye of the Hurricane for the same. Holly misses a charge into the post and takes a super swinging neckbreaker (that's always looked cool) to put both guys down. The chokeslam is countered into a rollup so Crash can impress Stephanie or whatever.

Rating: D+. So now we're to the point where we're jobbing talented guys like the Hurricane to validate Stephanie's investments? This is a situation where it would have been better to just have Crash show up on Smackdown one night and say he changed brands off camera. There was no need to make this a story other than for the sake of more Stephanie vs. Bischoff nonsense.

Edge/Undertaker/Rikishi vs. Kurt Angle/Chris Benoit/Eddie Guerrero

These are the six people from the series of matches last weeks if the reasoning isn't clear. Rikishi and Angle gets things going and I'll spare you the normal "why is Rikishi here" question. Thankfully it's quickly off to Undertaker for a big boot but it's way too early for a chokeslam. Instead Benoit comes in and kicks away in the corner, only to get tossed into the corner for his efforts.

Rikishi comes back in to far too strong of a pop and gives Benoit a sitout Rock Bottom before throwing him into Angle. Edge gets a slightly weaker pop as he goes after Eddie, who takes over off the strength of some double teaming. The heels keep Edge in trouble with the rapid tags and it's Angle grabbing a chinlock.

An Edgecution gets Edge out of trouble and the hot tag brings in Undertaker to clean house. Rikishi gets in a belly to belly on Angle and superkicks Benoit, leaving Angle to take the Stinkface. Angle and Benoit have a quick collision so Chris puts him in the Crossface. Eddie is furious...and surrounded. The OH NO look on Eddie's face when he realizes what's going on is perfect and his trying to chill with Rikishi is even better. The spear sets up

Eddie's face being shoved into the thong, followed by a chokeslam for the pin.

Rating: C+. If you put Rikishi in some tights or even regular trunks, this doesn't feel nearly as awkward. They did their thing here with the villains looking slightly more inept than they should. Benoit vs. Angle should be fun but that doesn't make for the best tag match in the world. Edge has kind of fallen through the cracks in recent weeks and his feud with Eddie needs a boost as they barely interact directly.

Overall Rating: D+. This depends on what you find more important. The wrestling is a little better this week but the booking is atrocious, with things like Crash Holly getting a story, Billy and Chuck's impending shenanigans, John Cena being sacrificed to D-Von of all people and Hardcore Holly beating Matt Hardy. There's so much that can be great around here but as usual, WWE seems more interested in doing the least logical and interesting things as possible.

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Monday Night Raw – May 31,

1993: I Stand in Awe of Scott Steiner

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 31, 1993

Location: Manhattan Center, New York City, New York

Attendance: 750

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, Bobby Heenan

We're less than two weeks away from King of the Ring and it would be nice to have them actually plug more than one of the first round matches for a change. Other than that we have Hulk Hogan vs. Yokozuna for the WWF Title coming up but since Hogan can't be bothered showing up, there's only so much they can do to set things up. Let's get to it.

It's Memorial Day so Jim Duggan welcomes us with a USA chant for all the fallen soldiers.

Opening sequence.

The announcers hype the show a bit and promise a catfight between Luna Vachon and Sensational Sherri.

Intercontinental Title: Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Marty Jannetty

Marty is defending and has Sherri in his corner for a story that almost no one remembers. Bigelow has to break up a battle of the women to start and Marty gets pounded for not paying attention. Serves him right. Marty has to fight out of the corner and lands on his feet to counter a backdrop. We hit the bearhug though and things slow down all over again. Marty comes back with either a middle rope knee to the back of the head or a middle rope headscissors which was partially botched.

We take a break (kind of an awkward place for one) and come back with Jannetty caught in a chinlock. Marty fights up and gets two off a middle rope clothesline but Bigelow shrugs off the jumping back elbow. With nothing else working, Marty tries a front facelock, earning himself that hard slam from Bigelow. A double underhook powerbomb into a backbreaker looks to set up the flying headbutt, only to have Sherri grab Bigelow's foot. Marty kicks him to the floor for a plancha, setting up the countout to retain.

Rating: C+. Jannetty is a lot better in the ring than he's given credit for and if he was able to stay clean for more than probably eight days in a row, I'm sure he would have been a bigger deal. It's not like he was that far behind the other midcard acts of his day. Couldn't you picture him around the same level as say, Jeff Jarrett? Bigelow crushes Marty's ribs before leaving.

Back from a break and Sherri calls Luna out for a fight. Luna comes out and takes a quick beating but Bigelow comes out to make things a bit less even. Tatanka runs out for the save. Wouldn't Jim Duggan make more sense as he's facing Bigelow in the tournament?

Steiner Brothers vs. Rich Myers/The Executioner

Rick works on Executioner's (generic masked jobber) arm to start before whipping him HARD into the corner. One heck of a jumping Steiner Line makes things even worse so it's off to Myers, whose luck is even worse. Why is it worse you ask? Well that's because after a few quick holds, Scott gives him a pumphandle slam and the STEINER SCREWDRIVER.

If you've never seen that, it's a vertical suplex but Scott drops them straight down into a sitout Tombstone. It was probably only used about ten times because people are scared to death of taking the thing (understandable) but DANG it looks great. Even the New York fans were impressed by that. The Steiner Bulldog wraps up the body that used to be Myers.

Rating: D+. The more I watch the Steiners, the more impressed I am by them. They just maul people like they're nothing and it's one of the most entertaining things you'll ever get to see. That Screwdriver looked perfect and it's still one of the best finishers, or at least the most devastating. Just fun all around here, unless you're Myers.

Mr. Hughes vs. Bert Centeno

For the sake of simplicity, just imagine every power move you would expect to see in a squash and Hughes uses it here. A Boss Man Slam wraps it up in very short order.

King of the Ring Report with nothing new to talk about.

Jim Duggan vs. Mark Thomas

Jim runs him over, does a very rare suplex and finishes with the

three point clothesline. Just a squash.

Post match Duggan leads the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The 1-2-3 Kid can't believe he's here and can't believe he's been offered \$5,000 to face Razor Ramon again (upgraded from \$2,500). He still won't do it though.

Razor Ramon vs. Tony Roy

The fans chant 1-2-3 with Savage leading the people. Roy rolls a distracted Ramon up for two and it's time for the beating to begin. The all away slam gets two and Ramon puts on a leg trap chinlock. It's off to an abdominal stretch, followed by the super belly to back suplex and the Razor's Edge for the pin.

Rating: C-. I can go for a ticked off Ramon hurting small people who dare to annoy him. Ramon is big enough to make the power moves look good but he's not big enough to be considered a giant. That's a rare physical type and something that can be turned into something special, which Ramon certainly was.

Mr. Fuji and Yokozuna come out to say Memorial Day should be June 13 because it's the day Hulkamania will die. At least I think that's what they're saying because they have to talk over the HOGAN SUCKS chants. Duggan pops up in the balcony to wave the American flag as we wrap it up.

Overall Rating: D. Just a night of squashes as we're completely out of things to talk about before the pay per view. That's the danger of running a tournament as there's not much to talk about because for some reason they seem to think the tournament itself is more than enough to carry the whole thing. Boring show here, but check out the Screwdriver.

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Monday Night Raw – May 24, 1993: You Wouldn't Expect This

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 24, 1993

Location: Manhattan Center, New York City, New York

Attendance: 1,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, Bobby Heenan

Something tells me this one won't be as memorable as last week. We're less than a month away from King of the Ring and the tournament is mostly set but the big story continues to be...well non-existent really. Most of the stories feel like they're just there instead of one thing being miles ahead of the rest. To be fair though, that makes for some more interesting shows as you don't know what you're getting. Let's get to it.

Doink the Clown comes out for his match and hides underneath the ring (hiding as much as you can with a camera on you) but we cut to outside where Lord Alfred Hayes is with...DOINK THE CLOWN! See, it's an illusion, which is code for WWF announcers being too stupid to realize more than one person could wear a clown suit.

King of the Ring Qualifying Match: Doink the Clown vs. Mr. Perfect

This is the third try at this match as both previous attempts had gone to draws. Doink throws a towel at Perfect to get in some cheap shots but Perfect easily takes him down and works on the leg. Back from a break with Doink limping around but still beating Perfect down on the floor.

Perfect comes right back with a headscissors to keep Doink on the mat. It turns into an amateur match with Perfect getting the better of it and stomping on the knee again. Perfect puts on a leglock with

Doink's shoulders down and slaps the clown every time he gets up before getting pinned. Doink takes him right back down though and we hit a top wristlock of all things.

We take a second break and come back with the two of them slapping it out until Perfect is pulled face first into the middle turnbuckle. That's fine with Perfect, who clotheslines the heck out of Doink and sends him outside. That means we play switching clowns (somehow the referee doesn't notice the missing makeup but Vince of all people catches the problem) but the fresh Doink is caught in a quick PerfectPlex to send Perfect to the tournament.

Rating: B. This was an entirely different kind of match than you would have expected as heel Doink was a fascinating character who could wrestle a rock solid technical match and be all evil at the same time. Of course Perfect can keep up with anyone on the mat and he was on some amazing fire in this face run. It's a shame he didn't get to do it more often too as he was excellent around this time. Post match Perfect gets double teamed until Crush comes in for the save.

King of the Ring Report with the now complete brackets:

Bret Hart

Razor Ramon

Mr. Perfect

Mr. Hughes

Tatanka

Lex Luger

Bam Bam Bigelow

Jim Duggan

Hulk Hogan, looking probably forty pounds lighter than usual, is ready for Yokozuna and brags about his barely existent physique.

Money Inc. vs. Mike Bell/Tony DeVito

Non-title and DiBiase offers \$100 for a shoe shine, meaning Heenan has to be held in his seat. A kid comes in and does the shining but IRS says that'll be \$70 tax. The kid doesn't seem to mind making \$30 for about forty seconds of work and leaves smiling. Of course Vince and Randy freak out about how humiliating that was for him. DiBiase

sends Bell face first into the mat so it's off to DeVito as the fans get on IRS' case. Not his literal case but you get the idea. The squashing continues as we hear about the 1-2-3 Kid winning last week. Ted's powerslam sets up the Write Off clothesline to put Tony away.

Rating: D. Just a squash here (with Vince saying DeVito was squashed after the match) and that's all it needed to be. DiBiase always felt a little bit out of place in 1993 as he didn't have the same fire he had a few years earlier. Then again it might be the whole tag team thing as Money Inc. was fine but not exactly inspiring.

Crush vs. Bobby Who

Crush throws him into the corner and we're already in the bearhug as the announcers make WHO jokes. The head vice wraps this up after far longer than it needed to go.

Rating: D-. There's only so much I can say when a match runs over three minutes and there are two extended holds. Crush really did seem ready to jump through the ceiling but it never quite happened. Maybe it was the color scheme but it just didn't work for some reason. Either way, this was longer than it needed to be and the WHO jokes didn't help.

Here's Razor Ramon to talk about his loss to the 1-2-3 Kid. He's not exactly happy as you might expect and has an idea: he'll face Kid again next week and is willing to put up \$2,500 to get Kid in the ring. Vince shifts things over to the first round of the King of the Ring with Ramon facing Bret Hart. Cue Bret as the fans chant 1-2-3. Bret makes fun of Razor for losing to one of the underneath guys and Ramon is livid as the Canadian leaves.

Heenan does his watching TV bit when Johnny Polo (Raven) pops up on his screen to say don't change the channel because Adam Bomb is next. Eh clever enough.

Adam Bomb vs. Phil Apollo

Apollo would wind up playing Doink when the original (Matt Borne) left. We hit the beating in a hurry, which might be taking place due to Phil's trunks being WAY too small. Adam throws him outside for a bit before hitting him with a top rope clothesline. The Adam Smasher (powerbomb) is good for the pin.

Bam Bam Bigelow is ready to win the Intercontinental Title and isn't

worried about Sherri Martel in Marty Jannetty's corner. She was in his corner?

Overall Rating: C. That opener does more than enough to carry the rest of this squash heavy show. It's quite the drop from last week but it's still better than watching Shawn Michaels vs. Jim Duggan in a long, boring match. It helps that I like some of the wrestlers on here like Bomb and Crush so this wasn't the hardest thing in the world to sit through.

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Monday Night Raw – May 17, 1993: This is What Put Raw on the Map

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 17, 1993

Location: Manhattan Center, New York City, New York

Attendance: 1,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, Bobby Heenan

To say these recent shows haven't been interesting is a huge understatement. They're just not working and haven't been in almost the entire time the show has been on the air. You get a few moments

that are better than the rest but really, the show feels like Superstars with a budget and we need more than that. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Earlier today, Savage and the Smoking Gunns supported some Special Olympians. Nothing wrong with that.

We look at last week's brawl between Mr. Perfect and Shawn Michaels. Lord Alfred Hayes says someone is here in disguise and we'll see who it is later.

Smoking Gunns vs. Glenn Ruth/Tony Vajda

Ruth is more famous as Headbanger Thrasher. Bart hiptosses Vajda to start and the Gunns start tagging a bit. Ruth comes in and takes a clothesline as well but something is botched, only to have the Gunns save it with a double legsweep. Some very slow offense ensues, including some kicks and legdrops as the arm work continues. Billy backdrops Glenn into a piledriver (which might have been a botched powerbomb) for the pin.

Rating: D. Long and boring stuff here but that's what you had to expect. The Gunns certainly weren't a great team but at this point, there wasn't exactly much to go around in the division. They helped bolster the ranks a little bit and that's exactly what the division needed around this time.

Vince brings out Shawn Michaels for a chat and we hit the SHAWN IS GAY chants. Heenan: "You hear that? Shawn is great!" Shawn told us all that he would win the Intercontinental Title and defend it around the world, which is exactly what he did. He told us he would beat up Mr. Perfect and he's done that too.

Vince suggests that Shawn isn't exactly a fighting champion so Michaels agrees to face anyone anywhere anytime and you know that's not something you say in wrestling. Cue a "fan" who looks a lot like Marty Jannetty in a hoodie and sunglasses. The "fan" gets in the ring and removes the hood and sunglasses to reveal...MARTY JANNETTY! He'll take a title shot tonight and just happens to have his gear in the back. Vince says it's on for later tonight.

Razor Ramon vs. The Kid

This one is kind of famous. Razor throws the toothpick in his face

to start and lights up Kid's chest with some chops. There's the fall away slam and Razor slaps him in the back of the head. Razor misses a charge into the corner though and Kid goes up for a moonsault press for what might be the biggest upset in company history.

THIS is the moment that put Raw on the map. After being just another wrestling show for a few months, this match put it on the map as a show where things could happen. This isn't some pin where interference led to a pin. The Kid capitalized on Ramon's mistake and got a 100% clean pin. It's the kind of thing you don't see very often and the New York crowd ate it up. There's a reason this one was on highlight reels for a very long time and it still shows up occasionally.

Tatanka vs. Scott Taylor

Taylor gets backdropped to the floor for a fast start as Heenan talks about toilet paper statistics. More throwing around ensues and Vince suggests the Kid should now be the 1-2-3 Kid. The Papoose to Go puts Taylor away.

Rating: D+. Another squash but the fans needed a minute to breathe after the huge upset. It really is amazing how well Tatanka did with such a generic gimmick. He wasn't all that talented in the ring either but he made the most of it and that's what matters more than anything. Fans can tell when you're trying and that usually means success.

King of the Ring Report with Gene talking about the tournament and World Title match.

Yokozuna vs. Kamala

Kamala looks confused by Yokozuna's entrance but he looks that way more often than not. The collision goes to Kamala and a superkick to the chest staggers the bigger man even more. Kamala chops away but a shot to the throat slows him down again. The huge leg crushes Kamala but he pops up for more chops. Fuji grabs the leg though and Yokozuna finishes with the usual.

Rating: D. This was actually a lot less bad (I can't say better) than I was expecting here with Kamala giving us a few hope spots before losing in the end as you had to expect he would. Yokozuna was clearly on the way to getting the World Title back at the King of the Ring and there's nothing wrong with that. He never should have

lost it in the first place.

Intercontinental Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Marty Jannetty

Shawn is defending and gets rolled up a few times to start. A clothesline puts Shawn on the floor as Heenan is in full on panic mode early on. Marty follows him out with a slingshot plancha and the fans are WAY into him here. Back in and Marty grabs a flying headscissors for two as the very hot pace continues. A whip into the corner turns Shawn upside down and out to the floor. Michaels can't walk out though as Mr. Perfect is waiting for him in the aisle.

Back from a break with Marty eating a hot shot and we hit the chinlock. A catapult sends Shawn had first into the post for a very close two as the fans continue to die over these near falls. Marty gets two off a jumping back elbow and powerslam, followed by a spinning crossbody for the same. Shawn comes right back with the superkick but stops to yell at Perfect. That earns Shawn a towel to the face, setting up a small package to give Marty the pin and the title.

Rating: B. This was the kind of fast paced match that you just didn't get from Raw so far, making this even more impressive than usual. Marty winning the title (the first title change ever on the show) was a major deal as it made you feel like anything could happen. The fast pace helped a lot here and that's why the match stood out: it was genuinely different and more proof that the line should be "the Jim Neidhart of the team" rather than the Marty.

Overall Rating: B+. This is the show that made people believe Raw was something different. Having two big surprises like that in a row made Raw feel so much different and really inspired the Monday Nitro formula. The idea here was to make Raw feel like a show you couldn't miss and that's exactly what they did. Really well done here and by far the benchmark for good Raw's in the early days.

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Monday Night Raw – May 10, 1993: When Mr. Clean Can't Save You

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 10, 1993

Location: Manhattan Center, New York City, New York

Attendance: 1,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, Bobby Heenan

It's the start of a fresh taping cycle with a rematch for the Intercontinental Title. Jim Duggan wasn't happy with losing his first shot at Shawn Michaels due to countout so we have a lumberjack match this time around. We're also getting ready for the King of the Ring, meaning more qualifying matches. Let's get to it.

Earlier tonight, Shawn Michaels was talking about the title match when Mr. Perfect jumps him, starting a fight that winds up on a car (Howard Finkel's to be exact).

Opening sequence.

The announcers argue over their favorite lumberjacks.

King of the Ring Tournament Qualifying Match: Typhoon vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

They bounce off each other to start (duh) so Typhoon slams him. Typhoon gets in a few more big shots until he gets sent into the post to really change control. It's off to the big fat chinlock and we take a break. Back with Bigelow hitting a Samoan drop, followed by the flying headbutt for the pin.

Rating: D-. What else were you expecting here? Bigelow was actually

talented and getting a push around this time so it makes a lot more sense to have him go over the waste of a roster spot that is Typhoon. That waste would be over shortly though as Typhoon left and became the Shockmaster very soon after this.

The Smoking Gunns are coming.

Yokozuna vs. P.J. Walker

That's Justin Credible. Minus the bad hair cut, Walker does have a great look and could have been a Marty Jannetty style guy if he never went to ECW. An early belly to belly suplex sets up the big leg, followed by the Banzai Drop for the easy pin. On Walker if that's not really clear.

King of the Ring Report focusing on the tournament. It's so odd to see Gene Okerlund looking somewhat young. Well, younger at least.

Mr. Perfect vs. Iron Mike Sharpe

For some reason Perfect hits on the rather hefty Raw Girl, only to throw his gum in her mouth. She seems to like it so the announcers hit the UNCOOKED, UNCUT, UNCENSORED line. Perfect dropkicks Mike to the floor and rains down some right hands in the corner. Sharpe comes out of the corner and they chop the heck out of each other with Perfect getting the better of it. The fans are doing the wave so Heenan starts watching TV in an odd bit. Heenan is looking for "that movie where the girl goes to Dallas", and I'm assuming you get that joke for yourself. The PerfectPlex wraps Sharpe up.

Rating: C. This actually wasn't half bad with Sharpe being the kind of guy with enough experience to make a go of it. I can live with a slightly more energetic squash as it's a lot better to have something with some effort instead of just having someone get broken in half and then hit with a finisher.

Cannonball Kid vs. Mr. Hughes

That would be Lightning Kid from last week. Hughes brings out Harvey Wippleman as his new manager. A powerslam sets up a two handed chokeslam as this is more dominance. Hughes kicks him in the face and finishes with a Boss Man Slam. The name changes are at least something interesting and might be leading to something.

Intercontinental Title: Jim Duggan vs. Shawn Michaels

Michaels is defending and this is a lumberjack match. During his

entrance, Duggan goes outside and drops Yokozuna with one punch. TAKE THAT HOGAN! Shawn comes out on crutches and something seems to be afoot. Er...maybe aknee or aleg. Mr. Perfect doesn't buy it and throws Shawn inside with the knee looking just fine.

Jim goes right after him and holds Shawn up for a good while before the slam. The fans call Shawn gay as Duggan gets two off a suplex. We hit some choking in the corner and Shawn is getting destroyed so far. Right hands in the corner knock Shawn silly and Duggan tosses him outside as I remember this is a lumberjack match. Shawn is thrown back inside and we take a break.

Back with Duggan missing a knee to FINALLY give Shawn a breather. Shawn removes his boot and knocks Duggan silly (Wouldn't it make more sense to have a foot inside the boot?) before Jim runs into another boot in the corner. It's off to the chinlock for a bit before Duggan comes back with more clotheslines and a slam. Duggan's chinlock doesn't do much but Shawn knocks him into Bigelow on the apron. Yokozuna adds a huge leg on the floor but Perfect comes in for the DQ.

Rating: D. The problem with these early Raw's is they try to stretch out matches that have no business being stretched. Counting commercials, this went about twenty minutes. Did ANYONE want to see Duggan go that long at any point past about 1984? It wasn't the worst match ever but the lumberjacks were only there for the ending, which isn't the most interesting thing in the world.

The lumberjacks brawl to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. A five and a half minute Mike Sharpe match isn't enough to save this one and that really shouldn't be much of a surprise. These shows are all about the big match and Jim Duggan in a match this long isn't going to make that work. We need to actually get to something interesting soon because these shows aren't working at the moment.

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Monday Night Raw – May 3, 1993: What Passed for a Big Match

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 3, 1993

Location: Manhattan Center, New York City, New York

Attendance: 1,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, Bobby Heenan

It's another fresh month here as I'm hoping to start doing more of these. This is very early in the show's run as we're not even going to hit episode twenty by the end of the month. It's also coming up on the first King of the Ring but there's a good chance a lot of the tournament will take place on Superstars, which was still the major show for the most part. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Intercontinental Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Jim Duggan

Duggan is challenging and is in his weird singlet phase here. Shawn bails to the floor to start as the stalling is very obvious here. Back in and we hit some clotheslines before Shawn goes over to mess with Duggan's board. Duggan won't let him walk out and we take a break.

Back with Duggan getting his throat snapped across the top rope, followed by a few kneedrops. Some elbows get two and it's off to the chinlock. Shawn cuts off a comeback with a knee to the ribs as this is in need of some caffeine. What it doesn't need is a snapmare into

another chinlock. Duggan fights up again and hits a few big right hands. A very spinning slam sends Shawn out to the floor and they walk around a lot for the double countout.

Rating: D. Far too much chinlockery here which is so often the case around here. Yeah it was an eleven minute match but that doesn't mean it's the right idea. It made for a very long and dull match as Duggan wasn't about to win the title and his offense was almost all brawling. Shawn is a borderline miracle worker but he needs a little more than this.

Duggan doesn't think this is fair and wants a rematch so he sits in the ring.

King of the Ring Report with a look at the updated qualifying matches. Not much to see here but I miss these things.

Doink the Clown vs. Kamikaze Kid

Now this is an interesting one as the Kid is making his debut after being one of the hottest indy acts in the country. However he's been tweaked a bit as he was better known as the Lightning Kid (with his tights saying L. Kid) but now he's under a new name. You would know him better as the 1-2-3 Kid or X-Pac. Doink runs him over to start and grabs an STF. A few elbow drops set up the Stump Puller (Doink sits on his neck and pulls back on the leg) for the submission.

Apparently Duggan is on the phone with President Jack Tunney. I'm as riveted as you are.

Bob Backlund vs. Dwayne Gill

They slowly circle to start with Backlund tripping him down a few times. That goes nowhere so let's talk about Duggan getting his rematch against Michaels next week in a lumberjack match. Gill hiptosses him down and grabs the shortarm scissors so Backlund can do the power up spot. A bridging cradle (with two thumbs up) gives Bob the pin.

Rating: D+. Not much you can say here but it could have been worse. I know Backlund has won a lot of matches in his day but he just beat GILLBERG. This was fine enough as a way to kill some time but I don't think anyone was buying Backlund as anything interesting at this point.

Duggan says he'll beat Shawn in a fight instead of a match. This leads to an explanation of a lumberjack match for the really slow

fans.

The Smoking Gunns are coming and like to shoot things in the desert. These vignettes need to come back, albeit in a slightly less cheesy form.

Headshrinkers vs. Jim Bell/Jay Savage

Lou Albano comes out for commentary as a surprise and goes on a rant about how he doesn't trust Heenan. Bobby: "I'm not a demented halfwit where you put his brain in a pigeon and he flies upside down!" Sledge gets tossed into the air for a big crash and now we talk about the lumberjacks to ignore the match even more.

A spike piledriver only draws an OH NO and it's back to Albano bantering. Normally I would make fun of this but what else is there to talk about during a squash? Albano speaks...whatever language the Headshrinkers speak and tries to get them to follow the rules. The destruction continues and it's a double Stroke into Fatu's Superfly Splash for the pin.

Rating: D. This was all about the angle with Albano wanting to turn the Headshrinkers towards the light and there's nothing wrong with that. I'd much rather they take a squash and turn it into a story instead of just wasting our time like most matches such as this one. Then again it might just be because I'm a Headshrinker fan.

Home improvement with the Bushwhackers from Smack Em Whack Em, which is pretty easily the best Coliseum Video ever.

Kamala vs. Rich Myers

Kamala's manager Slick isn't here this week for no apparent reason. The tossing around begins and we hit some choking. A superkick sets up the big splash and the fans remind Kamala to turn the jobber over for the pin.

Shawn is annoyed to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. The chinlocking in the Intercontinental Title match really hurt things here but it could have been a lot worse. 1993 just isn't that interesting and there's really not much of a way around that. There isn't much to say here as there's over a month before the next pay per view and that doesn't leave a lot to talk about week to week.

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Impact Wrestling – February 2, 2017: They Managed an Upgrade

Impact Wrestling

Date: February 2, 2017

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: D'Angelo Dinero, Josh Matthews

It's Open Fight Night and that means we get to find out who wants what match from their Race for the Case briefcases. Basically, in order of 1-4, everyone can pick a match and stipulation but nothing can be repeated, meaning there can't be four cage matches or four World Title matches. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick explanation of Race for the Case.

Recap of the Iron Man match with Lashley regaining the World Title. I still don't see what was so great about it.

Here are the Hardys to open things up with Jeff carrying the #1 briefcase. The Seven Deities have told Matt that the brothers must win as much tag team gold around the world as they can. Therefore,

they have granted the Hardys, I kid you not, a teleportation device to send them on their International Expedition of Gold. Now they want the Bucks of Youth, the Day of New and the Family of Wyatts, all of whom must be deleted. Anyway, Jeff knows who he wants to fight.

TNA World Title: Jeff Hardy vs. Lashley

Jeff is challenging of course and Josh actually does his job by pointing out that the Tag Team Titles can't be defended or challenged for tonight because Jeff is already wrestling. Uh, what does this have to do with Schitt's Creek? I was promised Schitt's Creek updates. We start after a bell with Jeff punching his way out of the corner, only to get his head taken off with a clothesline. Jeff sends him over the ropes and then into the apron, followed by another ram into the barricade. A powerbomb plants Jeff on the steps and the champ chokes with a boot.

Back with Jeff making his comeback with the usual and getting two off the Twist of Fate and Swanton. Another Swanton gets the same with Lashley putting his foot on the ropes. With the wrestling not working, Jeff sends him into the steps but misses a slingshot Swanton to the floor for an even worse than usual crash. The spear retains the title at 14:03.

Rating: B-. This felt like a main event style match but as usual it's the same problem Impact so often has: there's no reason for these two to be fighting other than the challenger won a qualifying match. There's no personal issue and it's all about the title. It's cool to have a feud about the title but it feels like that's the vast majority of what TNA does. Have something personal for a change and it can do you a lot of good.

Post match, Josh says no one has been able to figure Lashley, the FOUR TIME World Champion, out. Before I can explain why that makes no sense, here's Eddie Edwards because this feud isn't quite done yet. Eddie wants his rematch and Lashley agrees, but this is Eddie's last shot.

Tyrus and Eli Drake are ready to shock the world with their

briefcase choice.

Earlier today, Rosemary tried to get Brandi to join Decay. Brandi declined so Rosemary licked her face.

In case that wasn't clear enough, Rosemary invites Brandi to join Decay but gets turned down again.

And now, a day in the life of Aron Rex. This involves riding around in a golf cart and Spud putting down a mat in the back.

Sienna vs. Brooke Tessmacher

Brooke starts fast and gets two off a middle rope X-Factor. A chase goes badly though, allowing Sienna to get in a cheap shot to take. Maria adds a few kicks to the back and distracts the referee so Sienna can choke for a bit. Guest commentator Madison Rayne would rather talk about how great Brooke looks so soon after having a child, continuing the tradition of absolutely worthless TNA commentary. The AK-47 is broken up and Brooke gets a bad looking Muta Lock but Maria offers a distraction, allowing the Silencer to put Brooke away at 5:39.

Rating: D+. Annoying commentary aside, this was fine as a way to set Brooke up as a foil to the Lady Squad. Unfortunately Brooke feels like a relic of the past with the entire character being based on how she looks in trunks. That's not interesting and doesn't exactly come off as thrilling. At least it's a character though, unlike Gail Kim: WRESTLER.

Back to Aron Rex, who is having makeup applied. Spud reads off his appointments on various networks like FOX News and CNN. Rex doesn't care for being called "bloody good" because he doesn't like violence. He prefers "rexcellent".

The DCC wants Decay in a falls count anywhere match.

DCC vs. Decay

Falls count anywhere and I guess a handicap match as well, unless Rosemary is fighting with the guys. It's a brawl on the floor to start and we've already got a table ready. Steve escapes a powerbomb through said table and Abyss takes Kingston into the crowd to expand

the violence a bit wider.

Steve dives onto all three members of the DCC for two on Storm. It's time for the barbed wire board and Abyss rips off Kingston's shirt. That earns Abyss a low blow but Rosemary mists Kingston, setting up a chokeslam onto some tacks for two. Some beer bottles to Abyss' head set up a Last Call to put him into the barbed wire. A spike piledriver puts Steve through the table for the pin at 6:34.

Rating: C+. I find this to be false advertising as this was another iteration of the Monster's Ball instead of a falls count anywhere match. I've seen worse versions of this same match and they kept it short, which is a good idea when we've seen the same stuff over and over again, especially with Abyss in the matches every single time.

Maria and Mike Bennett come up to Braxton Sutter in the back to talk about the date with Laurel Van Ness. Braxton is glad it's over but Maria hears wedding bells over the chance of what might happen to Allie if he doesn't.

Here's Drew Galloway to say he's a fighting Grand Champion and will defend against anyone. Cue Moose to ask for a title shot but Galloway has something else in mind.

Grand Championship: Drew Galloway vs. Rob Ryzin

Galloway is defending and kicks Rob's head off thirty seconds in. This turns into an ad for Rudy, which is airing after the show. An overhead belly to belly has Ryzin in even more trouble and his comeback is cut off by a piledriver. Futureshock retains the title at 2:14.

Trevor Lee wants the injured X-Division Champion DJZ in a ladder match.

X-Division Title: DJZ vs. Trevor Lee

Ladder match with DJZ defending. Trevor gets backdropped to the floor to start and DJZ hits a dive but makes his leg even worse. It's so banged up that he has to stop Lee from getting the title, earning himself a ladder shot to the leg. Lee crushes the leg in the ladder but gets caught in a ZDT off the ladder. Shane Helms throws

in a chair and the leg gets crushed one more time but Lee is smart enough to keep it inside the chair and put the ladder on top, giving us a new champion at 7:30.

Rating: C. Now this one made sense and is a great example of how to use the case to your advantage. Also, it's long past the point of getting the title off DJZ as the division has died all over again. This wasn't a great ladder match (the time didn't do it any favors) but it made sense and that means a lot.

Tyrus wants Drake to have some quiet time to prepare.

Robbie E. interrupts Rex and gets a match next week.

Drake wants Ethan Carter III with his extremely bruised hip/rib.

Eli Drake vs. Ethan Carter III

Carter gets taken down to start with Drake hammering in right hands as we take an early break. Back with Drake sending Carter face first into the apron but missing a baseball bat shot. Drake forearms him in the back/hip and says YEAH a lot. One heck of a clothesline puts Carter down but Drake takes a bit too long following up, allowing Carter to grab a jackknife rollup for the pin at 10:47.

Rating: C-. Nothing special to see here but Carter and Drake have had a good enough feud. It's one of the few that isn't about a title and that makes things all the better. Unfortunately TNA didn't do the best job of explaining how Carter got hurt but the match was fine and the talking has been better so I can't complain too much.

Post match Drake unloads on Carter with the ball bat, only to have the DCC show up and stomp on Carter's nearly unconscious body. Drake smiles but the DCC beats down he and Tyrus as well. Carter takes a spike piledriver on the chair to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. The wrestling wasn't the best here but I liked the concept a lot more than I was expecting to. They used a formula that made sense here and helped push some feuds here, which is a little better than doing the same thing over and over again. I was never big on Open Fight Night in the first place but that probably had something to do with holding it once a month. Or maybe Hogan.

Yeah probably him. Anyway, not a bad show this week and that's high praise around here.

Results

Lashley b. Jeff Hardy – Spear

Sienna b. Brooke Tessmacher – Silencer

Drew Galloway b. Rob Ryzin – Futureshock

Trevor Lee b. DJZ – Lee pulled down the title

Ethan Carter III b. Eli Drake – Jackknife rollup

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205 Live – January 24, 2017: I Need to Stop Multi-Tasking

I really need to stop forgetting to post this show.

205 Live

Date: January 24, 2017

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Austin Aries, Corey Graves

It's the go home show for the Royal Rumble and 205 Live actually has a contribution to the card. This Sunday it's Neville challenging Rich Swann for the Cruiserweight Title and tonight we'll get to see Neville vs. Cedric Alexander in what has the potential to be a rather entertaining match. Let's get to it.

We open with a clip of last night's brawl between Neville and Swann. Neville says last night was his fault because he made the mistake of underestimating Swann. Maybe he showed him a bit too much mercy but he won't make that mistake again. He's looking forward to beating Cedric up to prove that this is his show.

Opening sequence.

The announcers preview tonight's main event.

TJ Perkins vs. Tony Nese

Nese takes him down to the mat with a waistlock to start but a hurricanrana gives TJ two. An Octopus Hold doesn't get TJ very far so Nese elbows him in the jaw and grabs a chinlock. Back up and TJ's guillotine is easily muscled over into a suplex as Nese keeps showing off a good balance of power and speed. A middle rope springboard moonsault gets two on Perkins and it's time to crank on both of his arms.

Nese gets two more off a gutbuster as this match is showing more psychology than you would expect in a cruiserweight match. Graves even gets to point out that Nese is catching a breather while holding TJ in a bodyscissors. It's like the guy knows what he's talking about or something. Perkins comes back with a kick to the face and a middle rope hurricanrana before the Detonation Kick sends Tony outside. Back in and Tony hits a hard clothesline, only to get cradled for the pin at 8:45.

Rating: B-. Good stuff here and it's amazing how much better Nese is when he doesn't have Gulak there sucking all of the charisma out of the matches. Perkins could still be a player around the title division but I don't know how much Nese is going to be able to do if Neville gets the title on Sunday.

Nese suplexes TJ into the corner post match to knock Perkins silly, followed by a running knee to the head. That sounds rematchish.

Akira Tozawa debuts next week.

Perkins is being helped out.

Sheamus talks about winning the 2012 Royal Rumble.

Brian Kendrick vs. Tripp Bradshaw

Before the match, Kendrick promises to crush Bradshaw's dreams because the world is a cold and harsh place. Aries wants to know if Bradshaw is any relation to Justin Hawk (JBL's first WWE gimmick) as Brian pounds him into the corner to start. Tripp's neck is snapped across the top rope and a big boot makes things even worse. The Captain's Hook is enough to make Bradshaw tap at 2:04.

Swann tells Alexander to wait for Neville to make a mistake but make sure to save a piece for the Rumble.

Cedric Alexander vs. Neville

Feeling out process to start with Neville grabbing a hiptoss and telling Cedric to get out of his ring. The fans get behind Neville as he slips out of a wristlock and cranks on an armbar. Back up and Cedric dropkicks him out to the floor for a breather. The fans chant for CM Punk out of general annoyance.

A HARD kick to the face puts Neville back outside as this is more offense than anyone has been able to score on him. Cedric takes his sweet time though and gets whipped hard into the barricade. Neville turns the pace way down and starts slowly hammering away, followed by a snap suplex and running forearm for two.

We hit the chinlock for a bit until Cedric fights back up and dropkicks Neville to the floor again. There's a BIG flip dive which Mauro describes as ostentatious. Aries: "It must be great. It has my name in it!" Back in and the springboard clothesline is only good for two. Neville tries to speed things up again but runs into a Spanish Fly (flipping downward spiral).

The Lumbar Check is broken up though and it's a deadlift German suplex for an even closer two on Cedric. Neville puts him on top for the superplex but gets reversed into a sunset bomb...which Neville flips out of because he can. The look on Cedric's face is perfect so he comes back with an enziguri. Cue Noam Dar for a distraction and the Rings of Saturn makes Alexander tap at 13:25.

Rating: B+. Now that worked. The idea of Neville being better than

anyone else around the show is a great story but what makes it even better is to have someone get this close and almost have Neville beaten to lose the match at the very last minute. I liked the match a lot better than I was expecting to and it's one of the better 205 Live matches to date.

Post match Dar goes after Cedric but Neville wants to beat on Alexander alone. Rich Swann comes in for the save and it's a big pull apart brawl (after several attempts) to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. Awesome show here as they packed all this stuff into less than fifty minutes. I don't know if it's just following the NXT formula to the letter or what else they're doing right but dang this was one heck of a show. They're getting the idea down to near perfection and adding in some more talent like Tozawa is only going to make things better.

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205 Live – January 31, 2017: Hail to the King

205 Live

Date: January 31, 2017

Location: American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Austin Aries, Corey Graves

It's the Neville Era and that means the new champion needs a challenger to go after the title. In theory that's going to be Rich Swann in a rematch but there's also Cedric Alexander who almost had Neville beaten until some interference cost him the match. This could go multiple ways and that makes for an interesting show. Let's get to it.

Long recap of Neville's rise to the top of the division.

Opening sequence.

Tony Nese vs. Lince Dorado

The cocky Nese takes him into the corner to start and throws Lince down for good measure. A hurricanrana sends Nese into the corner as well and a high crossbody gets two on Tony. That's enough for Nese who just starts blasting Lince in the face with hard shots, followed by a gutbuster to set up a bodyscissors. That makes sense for him as Nese has the power advantage so hitting Dorado really hard is the right call. Dorado fights back up with the handspring Stunner for two and a good looking dropkick draws an Okada reference from Mauro. Nese shoves him off the top though and the running knee is good for the pin at 6:08.

Rating: C. This is how you build someone up: let them pick up win after win and treat them as above the rest of the talent. It makes the crowd feel they're important and that's often going to work better than having some lame angle or a generic promo, especially when Nese isn't the best talker.

Nese goes after Dorado even more but TJ Perkins makes the save. See? Build Nese up and give him a feud against an established name. Works perfectly.

We look at Swann and Neville brawling last night on Raw, which saw Swann hurt his ankle.

Swann is in a walking boot but Neville comes in and kicks him down anyway. Now that's a heel.

Gran Metalik is coming. He was on the NXT house show I took in last month and he looked great.

Akira Tozawa vs. Aaron Solow

Brian Kendrick comes out for commentary and Solow is probably best known as Bayley's real life boyfriend. Feeling out process to start as it seems Tozawa is replacing the injured Tajiri as Kendrick's new rival. A dropkick and backsplash give Tozawa two and Solow is knocked out to the floor. After the suicide dive knocks Aaron silly, the snap German suplex gives Tozawa the pin at 3:03.

Rating: D+. Good debut here as Solow gets beaten down like the jobber that he is and Tozawa gets to look awesome. There's only so much you can do in a three minute match and that's all it needed to be. Tozawa could be a modern day Tajiri with some of those strikes, but that German suplex looked even better.

Post match Aries interviews Tozawa, who doesn't speak English.

Noam Dar and Alicia Fox come in to see Neville before their tag match tonight. Dar isn't worried about Jack Gallagher tonight but Neville doesn't want to hear about it. Oh and keep the love life baggage in the back. He leaves before Alicia can freak out.

Neville/Noam Dar vs. Jack Gallagher/Cedric Alexander

Gallagher is substituting for the injured Swann. Only Dar and Gallagher shake hands and it's Jack vs. Neville to get things going. Neville grabs a headlock but Jack does his handstand walk to escape, which doesn't sit well with the champ. The much stronger Neville starts in on the arm with Jack doing his spinning reversal.

That earns him a forearm to the face as Neville doesn't have time for the fanciness. Dar comes in and gets caught in a bulldog headlock takeover out of the corner. It's off to Cedric to stay on the arm with Gallagher putting on a hold that only a British wrestler could pull off. Neville gets tired of these shenanigans and forearms the heck out of Gallagher from the apron. An even harder dropkick to the back of the head makes things even worse.

We hit the chinlock but Dar makes a blind tag and tries to steal his own cover. That's just not cool with the champ so Dar lightens things up a bit by working on the arm. Neville comes back in but Dar

tags himself in a second time as you can almost feel the beating coming for him. Gallagher's headbutt gives him two on Dar with Neville having to run in for the save. Dar crawls over for the tag and Neville bails, as he certainly should do. It's back to Alexander for the handspring enziguri followed by the Lumbar Check for the pin at 13:05.

Rating: B-. Good, solid main event tag here with Gallagher selling quite well and Neville doing exactly what he should have done. One of the most annoying things that happens in wrestling is when the wrestlers stop doing what their character would do for the sake of a nothing tag. Neville has no allegiance to Dar and Noam ticked him off. This makes sense and I can always go for that.

Overall Rating: C+. The main event helps this one quite a bit with the new character and solid psychology being more than enough to make up for a not great opener. The show is rapidly developing its own continuity and feel, which is rather impressive after just ten episodes. Neville really is the king right now and that's going a long way to help this show.

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Ring of Honor TV – February 1, 2017: What I Want From ROH

Ring of Honor

Date: February 1, 2017

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentator: Kevin Kelly

I'm not sure what to expect from this show other than probably the other semifinal match in the Decade of Excellence Tournament. We're getting closer to the 15th Anniversary Show and that means we need to start putting together a card already. This could be anything and that means it could be fun. Let's get to it.

We open with Adam Cole bragging about winning the World Title for an unprecedented third time. Not much to see here other than "Cole is awesome."

You might be more familiar with Center Stage as WCW Saturday Night's home.

Tempura Boyz vs. Coast to Coast vs. Cheeseburger/Will Ferrara

Coast to Coast is Leon St. Giovanni and Shahim Ali. The Tempura Boyz (Yo and Cho) send Coast to Coast outside to start but get kicked in the face for their efforts. Leon gets back in and fires off some elbows to the face so here are the Boyz again to clean house for the first time. Cheeseburger dives on a bunch of people and Cho does the same for an even bigger crash.

This time it's Leon hitting a big corkscrew dive but here are the Young Bucks to watch (and take all the attention of course) as we take a break. Back with Ferrara taking a Shatter Machine to give Yo two and the Bucks on commentary to talk about the Hardys. The Bucks decide that the winners of this match are the new #1 contenders as Coast to Coast starts taking over. Stereo Coast to Coast dropkicks get two on Ferrara but a quick package piledriver puts Ali away at 7:24.

Rating: C. Just your standard indy style three way with no

particular rhyme or reason to anything but that's how it works around here. The Boyz aren't all that interesting so that's why they won and therefore get the title shot. At least the match meant something for a change, which is more than you can say about a lot of ROH matches. The double dropkick wasn't bad but other than that it was a bunch of flip dives by people I had issues telling apart.

Post match the Bucks announce the title match and superkick the Boyz. This brings out Adam Cole for his first comments as champion. That means STORYTIME with Cole calling himself a legend and a history maker. Cole laughs off the idea of having various challengers, such as Dalton Castle, who is just a gimmick. Then there's Bobby Fish and Cole might as well get rid of the other half of ReDRagon. Finally, he's beaten Jay Briscoe and Jay Lethal so he can just do it again. For some reason Cole left off Christopher Daniels, which suggests that he's winning the tournament.

Video on Juice Robinson.

TV Title: Marty Scurll vs. Juice Robinson

Robinson is challenging and Alex Shelley is on commentary. Scurll mocks Robinson like a bird for some reason and it's already off to the left arm work. A shoulder goes nowhere so Marty slaps him in the face and does the bird a bit more. Scurll cranks on the arm some more and we take a break.

Back with Robinson hitting a top rope headbutt and a heck of a clothesline for two. I'm not much on Robinson but he certainly does hit hard. A good powerbomb gets two more but Juice grabs a superplex, followed by a superkick, to send Juice outside. Marty whips him hard into the barricade and gets two off a piledriver. That means it's time to snap a finger and the crossface chickenwing makes Robinson tap at 10:34.

Rating: B-. Much better than I was expecting here as Robinson certainly has some fight in him. Marty is a good choice for a champion but I'd like to hear some more from him instead of just watching him do chickenwings every match. He's still good (at being evil that is) and it's hardly too late to make him work.

Post match Marty issues an open challenge for a title shot. Cue Chris Sabin, Jonathan Gresham, Donovan Dijak, Jay White and Lio Rush to answer for a nice change of pace. If there's an open challenge like that, you would think more than one person would answer. Why

doesn't that happen more often? After a break, all of the challengers (plus Alex Shelley) agree to a six way match for the title shot next week.

Jay Lethal and Jay Briscoe are ready to fight in the tournament.

Decade of Excellence Tournament Semifinals: Jay Lethal vs. Jay Briscoe

Frankie Kazarian is on commentary this time as I think we've got a running theme. They lock up to start but nothing of note happens until Cole comes out to watch. That means an early break and we come back with the slow pace picking up a bit as Briscoe grabs a hurricanrana. They seem to hit head, setting up an early Jay Driller for two. Lethal bails to the floor which means one heck of a suicide dive.

Back in and a hard clothesline gets two more as this is all Briscoe so far. Briscoe slowly hammers away as Cole rips on the fans at the upcoming Texas house shows. Back with Lethal getting two off a Lethal Combination and shoving Briscoe off the top to set up Hail to the King. That doesn't quite work so let's hit a Figure Four instead (Cole: "I INVENTED THAT MOVE!"). After the rope grab, Lethal misses the Injection and gets his head clotheslined off for the pin at 13:28.

Rating: B-. These two have some awesome chemistry but the time issues hurt things a lot here. Briscoe vs. Daniels will be a solid match though that promo earlier really suggests that they've spoiled the ending. I could go for Daniels getting a shot at the title and beating Briscoe would make him seem feel like more of a main event player.

Cole says he'll be facing Briscoe for the title, again overlooking Daniels.

Overall Rating: B. That's one of the best TV shows they've had in a good while, which says a lot considering there's a lot on here that feels like it really doesn't matter. I'm looking forward to seeing where they go with the Anniversary Show, which is a lot more than I can say for several of the most recent pay per views. Good stuff this week, which sounds rather strange to say around here.

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